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ABSTRACT

In order to introduce information about the new California State University freshman admission requirements to high school students, an outreach program has been developed in the university's feeder high schools, particularly those with large numbers of minority students. A pilot project was conducted with tenth grade students in Alhambra High School. The project involved presenting a video about the university and a series of talks designed to motivate the students to attend college and to inform them about which high school courses they should take to qualify for admission. Six presentations were given to a total of about 400 students. A parent presentation was also given. Subsequently, 50 college-bound students were selected by the school career guidance staff and were taken on a field trip to the university campus. The project was evaluated by means of questionnaires, returned by teachers, counselors and 269 students, and through follow-up interviews. The project was considered successful, although more time for presentation and presentations in smaller segments throughout the school year to the entire student body are suggested as improvements. 9 references. (KM)

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PRESENTING CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO TENTH GRADE STUDENTS A PILOT PROJECT

by

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HE 021 417

In 1986, the Board of Trustees of The California State University (CSU), in an effort to strengthen the preparation of entering students adopted a new set of freshman admission requirements to be implemented in 1988.[1]

In order to introduce information about these new requirements to high school students, the School Relations office at California State University, Los Angeles has coordinated an outreach program in CSULA's feeder high schools, particularly those in which there are large numbers of minority students. The pilot project to be described in this article is a part of this outreach program.

It is well known that many minority students are not familiar with college requirements, college options, and the benefits of attending college. Family attitudes, peer pressures, and a fear of failure may tend to discourage these students. So many minority students drop out of high school that a special effort must be made to motivate them to continue their education and to influence their peers to do likewise.[2] This project, therefore was planned to appeal to the special needs and interests of the various minority groups represented in the area.

The new CSU admission requirements include the following college preparatory courses:

English, 4 years
Mathematics, 3 years
U.S. History, 1 year
Science, 1 year
Foreign language, 2 years
Visual and performing arts, 1 year
Electives, 3 years

We defined the objectives of the project as the following:

1. To encourage students to seriously consider college as a viable option.
2. To provide information about:
   a. CSU admission requirements

b. CSU admission procedures

c. Financial aid

d. Majors at California State University, Los Angeles

e. Careers

f. Opportunities available for minority students

g. Community colleges and transfers to Cal State L.A.

h. Life at Cal State L.A.

i. Workshops on study skills

3. To provide first-hand experience with:

a. University students

b. University professors

c. The Cal State L.A. campus

We proposed to present to present to tenth grade students in Alhambra High School (AHS) a video about CSU and a series of talks designed to motivate them, to attend college and inform them about which high school courses they should take in order to qualify for admission to the CSU in 1988. The presentation was to be followed by a field trip in which groups of these students toured the Cal State L.A. campus. Parents were also to be invited to hear a panel of speakers from Cal State L.A. discussing admission requirements and financial aid.

We discussed the proposed project with administrators at Cal State L.A. and AHS and with career guidance staff, counselors, department chairs, and teachers at AHS. The form and content of the presentations were approved, and times were arranged when students could be released from their classes to attend the presentation.

Several interested Cal State L.A. faculty members volunteered to be guest speakers in the presentation.

Since Alhambra High School has a significant number of students whose native language is not English, translators were contacted to provide translations of written and oral presentations in various languages, primarily for the benefit of the parents. The Plant Operations manager at AHS was asked to provide space, seats, tables, and a video player. Letters were sent to parents notifying them of the time and place of the presentation for parents. Press releases, programs, fact sheets, questionnaires, and certificates of appreciation were prepared and printed at AHS and Cal State L.A. Field trips to Cal State were arranged, for which the university provided bus transportation, tour guides, and speakers.

Because of the novelty of this project, it was necessary to improvise. We had to explain our objectives to each of the teachers in order to enlist their cooperation in releasing students to attend the presentation. Because of regulations governing the minimal time that students must be exposed to classroom instruction, many teachers and department chairs were reluctant to release their classes for participation in our presentation, even though they agreed with us that the presentation would benefit students. We had to respect their priorities while working toward a mutually satisfactory schedule. In doing this, however, we were forced to concede that students in track C, the lowest academic level, would be the group least likely to be interested in college and therefore would not be permitted to participate. In this way, we had to sacrifice about one-third of our intended audience. In our experience, many lower level students are interested in college, and they need encouragement too.

Because of the small screen size, video presentations are unsuitable for large groups. In order to be able to present the video to all of the students, therefore, we had to give six separate presentations.

The presentation for students was given on April 7, 1987, in the Little Theatre at AHS. It was attended by six groups, a total of about 400 students.

At the beginning of the presentation, the video, "All You Can Dream", was shown in English and Spanish versions. It portrays a Hispanic student succeeding in the CSU system. After the video, in order to reinforce its message, we asked the following questions:

What is the video trying to communicate?

What was happening in the video?

What kinds of feelings were expressed?

Did the young man work hard?

Was he rewarded for his work?

Did students drop out when things got tough?

Did you like the video?

Did it make you want to go to college?

If you had made this video, what would you have done differently?

During the presentation each student received fact sheets containing the names of school guidance staff and speakers, examples of college preparatory courses offered by AHS, the list of requirements for admission to the CSU in 1988, and other information about the CSU. Students could also take notes during the presentation. Talks were given by a panel of speakers from Cal State L.A. These talks covered such topics as the benefits of attending college, the CSU admission requirements, which high school courses will meet the requirements, waivers for conditional admission, special admission, financial aid, and scholarships.

Articles were printed in the school paper and in local newspapers inviting parents and other interested persons to attend the presentation for parents. Also, multilingual (English, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese) letters were sent to parents.

Subsequently, fifty college-bound students were selected by the AHS career guidance staff, with preference given to those who could meet CSU admission requirements but who might need extra encouragement. These students were taken by bus to the Cal State L.A. campus, where they toured several departments and heard brief talks by Cal State faculty members.

RESPONSE

Following the presentation, information forms and questionnaires were distributed to all students who had attended. Of the total of about 400 students, 308 returned the forms, 269 returned completed forms, and information was obtained from 39 others by asking questions. The following gender and ethnic affiliations and academic aspirations were recorded:

Ethnic	Male	Female
Asian	54	71
Chicano	34	34
Caucasian	18	21
Hispanic	13	10
Filipino	12	10
American Indian	3	2
Black	3	1
Other	12	10
	149	159

Plans for after high school:

Attend a 4-year-college or university	223
Attend a community college	34
Work part-time and attend a community college	11
Work part-time and attend a 4-year college	7
Find a job	5
Attend a trade school	5
Attend a community college, then transfer to a 4-year college	3
Enlist in the Navy	2

Highest degree expected	
A.A.	31
B.A. or B.S.	95
M.A. or M.S.	91
Doctorate	37

Evaluations of the presentation were also obtained by questionnaire. Additionally, we conducted follow-up interviews with individual students in order to answer their questions and elicit their opinions:

	Yes	No
Did this presentation increase your knowledge about CSU requirements?	240	28
Do you have any unanswered questions about college?	71	198

Students wrote questions and comments such as the following:

"What are the requirements for community college?

"I need to know more about financial aid."

"How can I transfer from a community college to a university?"

"How can I get a job after I get a degree?"

"Is there parking available at CSLA?"

"Are service clubs and sports important in college?"

"What does college look for in a student?"

"What courses can I take to meet the requirement for visual and performing arts?"

"Do minorities have any advantage?"

"Which university is best to go to?"

"Does CSLA have dorms?"

"Can I join the military and go to college?"

"The video helped me to think about college."

"Does Mandarin meet the foreign language requirement?"

"Why do we have to study all different courses instead of our major?"

"I liked the speakers and learned a lot."

"How do you know what to major in?"

Teachers and counselors who attended the presentation also completed questionnaires, providing the following information:

Was the objective of the presentation worthwhile? Yes: 100%

Will the information presented be of value to you in answering students' questions? Yes: 83%

Were areas of interest to students adequately covered? Yes: 66%

Were students' questions adequately answered? Yes: 66%

Their comments included the following:

"Very well organized."

"Relaxed atmosphere."

"Students were able to ask questions of the presentors."

"Warm approach."

"Should be presented in smaller doses."

"Needed more structure."

"Innovative."

"Stimulated in us a desire to learn more about college requirements."

"Seemed spontaneous."

From the responses of both students and staff members it appears that:

1. The presentation was enjoyable and informative.
2. It stimulated thinking about college.
3. It encouraged students to ask the right kinds of questions.
4. It projected a positive image of Cal State L.A.
5. Ideally, additional time should be provided so as to provide more detailed information.

EVALUATION

Because this was a pilot project based on a novel idea, several obstacles had to be overcome. The idea had to be sold to many key people and their cooperation solicited. It was necessary to obtain permission from the administration of Alhambra High School to engage the school's staff, facilities, and students without disrupting the established curriculum. Under these conditions many compromises were necessary, and much energy was expended in coordinating the various fragments.

This year we had to compress the material planned for two 45-minute sessions into one 45-minute session. Too little time remained for questions and answers and for students to thoughtfully complete the questionnaires. A follow-up session would have been desirable.

"All You Can Dream", the Cal State L.A. recruitment video is a motivational piece and does not address requirements. In order to address that issue, we plan to produce another video, perhaps on 16 mm film, for use

in future presentations.

Most of the questions asked by students on the questionnaires actually had already been answered by speakers during the presentation. They answered questions about college requirements, degrees, transfers, financial aid, and so forth, but the pace was too rapid for students to absorb all of the information given. Many limited-English-proficiency (LEP) students particularly were unable to do this. The students' enthusiasm indicated that a series of short programs throughout the school year probably would be justified. The information provided in these programs could encourage a larger number of students to attend college, help them to plan and prepare for their future, give them a sense of purpose in their high school courses, and relieve counselors of the task of answering commonly asked questions on an individual basis. Administrators could be made aware of the motivational and informational benefits of such a series of programs for all high school students.

As a pilot project in the relatively unexplored field of college recruitment directed at minority students, this presentation succeeded in giving students the information they need, in identifying ways to improve future presentations, and in paving the way for more presentations of this kind.

We believe that the materials presented in this pilot project ought to be presented in smaller segments throughout the school year to the entire student body of the high school. This approach would offer the following advantages:

1. All students would learn more about post-secondary education.
2. A larger number of students would become interested in attending college.
3. Academically marginal students would be encouraged to try harder.
4. Students would receive specific, timely information they need to prepare themselves for college.
5. Students would have more time to think about college and ask questions.
6. The growth of rapport between students and college representatives would gradually eliminate uncertainties and misgivings, and the transition from high school to college would become easier.

The Accelerated College Enrollment Program (ACE) at Cal State L.A. permits certain superior students to take one or two regular university courses for credit each quarter during their high school years. This program could be enlarged to include more students.

We also believe that the college recruitment effort should be followed by support that would continue throughout the college years. Students need help in adjusting to the work load of college and in meeting other problems, while the university needs feedback from students in order to be able to adapt itself to meeting students' needs.

It has been found that most high school students, and especially minority students, do not understand what options they have with respect to post-secondary education and career opportunities.[3]

Recruitment efforts must be designed to appeal to students from diverse cultural backgrounds who may not be familiar with the traditional American ideals of education and individual development. Students must be persuaded that college can offer them many unique benefits without conflicting with personal, family, and cultural values. They must be persuaded that the benefits of college will outweigh the cost in terms of time, energy, and money.[4,5,6]

Recruitment efforts that are designed to appeal to students' interests and that accurately present the facts about college can help to avoid the dissolutionment that causes so many students to drop out of college.[7,8,9]

It is apparent to us that college recruitment should not be a one-shot affair, but a continuing process that gradually attracts and prepares students throughout their high school years, assures them that they will be admitted to the college of their choice when they graduate from high school, and supports and counsels them throughout their college years. This can be accomplished by a team of counselors, teachers, and parents who really care.

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